

Veteran litigator John Hueston to oversee federal judge's VA housing order

By Skyler Romero

Daily Journal Staff Writer

John C. Hueston, trial practice chair at Hueston Hennigan LLP, will act as a monitor overseeing last week's federal court order mandating increased veteran housing at the Department of Veterans Affairs campus in West Los Angeles, an order from Judge David O. Carter said on Wednesday.

"The court requires the services of a monitor to ensure timely and comprehensive compliance with order, which includes injunctive relief in the form of additional housing at the West LA VA Grounds and termination of illegal land-use agreements," Carter wrote. "Mr. Hueston has a long and distinguished private and public sector career that justifies his appointment."

Carter's Sept. 6 order voided leases the VA holds with the Brentwood School, Safety Park, Bridgeland Resources and UCLA and directs the department to devote more campus land to veteran housing. *Powers et al. v. McDonough et al.*, 2:22-cv-08357 (C.D. Cal., filed Nov. 15, 2022).

"It is a tremendous amount of work and responsibility," Hueston said in a phone call on Wednesday, adding that he was "gratified" to fill the role on a pro bono basis.

"I think that this is a historic and sweeping ruling that is attempting to right a very deep wrong against our veteran community," he continued.

Hueston is well-known as one of the lead prosecutors in the federal



John C. Hueston | Daily Journal photo

fraud and insider trading cases against Enron executives Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling. He also advised Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris during her time as a U.S. senator.

More recently, Hueston persuaded a judge to dismiss a high-profile \$100 million fraud suit by media mogul Byron Allen accusing McDonald's of failing to honor a pledge to boost spending on Black-owned

media. *Weather Group LLC et al. v. McDonald's USA LLC*, 23STCV10-045 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed May 4, 2023).

Hueston is currently defending Kirkland & Ellis LLP in two lawsuits over an alleged undisclosed intimate relationship between a Texas bankruptcy judge and a former partner at Texas' largest law firm, *Jackson Walker LLP. Van Deelen v. Jones et al.*, 23-cv-03729 (S.D. Tex., filed Oct. 4, 2023); *Bouchard*

v. Jones et al., 4:24-cv-00693 (S.D. Tex., filed Feb. 26, 2024).

According to Carter's order, Hueston's responsibilities will include overseeing the construction of temporary and permanent supportive housing as well as a town center, staffing case worker ranks, increasing outreach staff, preventing the VA from entering into improper land agreements and eliminating discriminatory practices.

Hueston said he anticipates “hiring experts and others to ensure that we have the right team to implement all aspects of the order on a timely basis.”

As for the now-voided leases, he said his specific role remains to be seen.

“The court plans additional hearings to discuss how, in particular,

the Brentwood School and UCLA will exit the leases, and in what fashion,” he said. “I anticipate I may have involvement in seeing through the implementation of the termination of those leases, in combination with planning for additional housing for homeless veterans.”

Lauren E. Willis, centennial professor of consumer law at Loyola

Law School, said in an email that Hueston has “an immense task” ahead of him.

“Under the best of circumstances, building projects are difficult, and the VA’s history of refusals to follow the law suggests the project could have an additional hurdle of VA intransigence,” she said. “Hopefully the monitor will be able to

keep all those involved focused on the shared goal of providing safe housing for veterans in a place where those veterans have access to medical care. If not, the court can hold intransigent parties in contempt of court, including by sanctioning responsible individuals.”

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